7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

Although the town center forms a rough rectangle on Map 1, the people think of it as being a square.[2] This conforms to the cultural ideal of a square applied in house, milpa, village, and probably world, although when anyone is asked about the last, he cautiously answers, "I have heard that it is round." The center is the unit that the people think of when they say *hteklum*, my land or my village. House lots are not sold to outsiders, particularly Ladinos, but the prohibition applies as well to other Indians living within the limits of the township.

The residents of the center identify themselves with the former residents of the two pre-Conquest sites occupying the hill of Amawitz[3] northwest of the center, and the hill of San Nicolás (called Lelem in Tzeltal) to the southeast. The following account is given of the founding of the present town in the valley:

Our ancestors lived in Amawitz. There wasn't enough water there, but there was a great deal that passed here in the valley. The ancestors came out of their cave to look at where the people should move. They told the people where they should go. The people "thought in common." They cut the trees here; then, when it was dry, they burned it with fire as they do for milpa. When it was cleared, they began to build their houses. Others saw this and came to build their houses. When they finished building their houses, everyone began to think of building a church. The first church was built in Alannantik [the low side] for San Pedro the Martyr. This was torn down because the witches used to come to get the permission of San Pedro to do witchcraft. When the new church was built, there was a division of the town into the upper and lower sections.

It is significant that the people attribute the initiative in the resettlement to the mythical ancestors, although archaeological evidence indicates that the present center was settled after the Conquest. The Conquest is not a part of their mythico-historic past. The ancestors are given credit for establishing everything.

2. The pre-Conquest term for local center was Tzamgholal (Calnek 1962:25), signifying "square head." "Head" town was possibly a ceremonial center.

3. Hermitte (1964:48) notes that in Pinola the "police" of the spiritual government are sent to outposts in Amawitz and Me?wakal in Amatenango. This suggests that it may be considered the ancestral home of other Indians of the area.

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970

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were not affected by the congregación. The fact that there is no mention in the post-Conquest documents of the introduction of dual divisions suggests that the model was indigenous to the area.

The Indians of Tzo'ontahal state that the dividing line of the division was established in its present position when a new church, replacing the first one which was burned, was built on the present site. Judging from a date carved in a beam of the church, this must have been about the year 1746. The endogamous restriction on marriage has not led to a sense of racial distinction between the two populations. Both groups feel that they are descendants of the same ancestor figures and under their guardianship. The same Tzeltal patronyms are distributed on both sides of the division, although there is a clustering of some of them on one or another side. Table 2 shows the distribution of patronyms of 714 male and female adults; 88 percent of the patronyms are found in both divisions.[4]

The functions of the division in organizing social groupings have been eroded, but some survive. Equal representation by civil officials from the upper and lower sections, when there are two or more posts at the same rank, is still in effect. The principle of alternation of the single posts of president and *síndico,* his administrative assistant, so that one term the incumbent is chosen from Ahk'olnantik and the following term from Alannantik has not been a decisive factor since the 1930s, when Indian communities were being drawn into more active participation in national programs of change (Chapter 9).

Residential expansion within the center has been almost entirely in Ahk'olnantik because of the addition of ejido lands formerly belonging to the finca of San Nicolás on this side of town. This one-sided increase in population finally resulted, in 1965, in a breakdown of the principle of equal representation in the ceremonial posts involving high expenses, those of the four *alfereces.* Although attempts were made to find candidates in Alannantik, there were no men with sufficient funds who had not

4. Carrasco (n.d.:5) quotes a document in the *Archivo General de Indias de Sevilla, Guatemala* 16 indicating that Spanish patronyms were given to the heads of calpules and that these were to be extended to all members of the calpul. The present distribution of name groups in the dual divisions cannot support this, nor can it refute the possibility that Spanish patronyms were related to some larger kin or territorial grouping more than three hundred years ago.

8: Hunt E-4,5 (1958)1962 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango
Aguacatenango

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621 and Amatenango are at present divided into two endogamous barrios, remnants of these parcialidades.

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101 The origin myth of Aguacatenango seems to agree with the historical evidence, both indicating that the Amatenango settlement was founded somewhat earlier. According to the people of Aguacatenango their ancestors came from a place named "Bahuitz," close to the region of Oxchuc. The elders of the group chose a place about 1,000 feet lower than the present location of the town. They had to move from this place (which now is the colonia of El Puerto, where Aguacatenango owns land for cultivation) because "they were bitten by insects and disliked the climate."

They arrived at the site of their present location, and asked for permission to occupy it from the people of Amatenango, from whom they obtained the land. While they were clearing the land for their houses, some men from Amatenango arrived to ask what they were doing. "We are cutting down the trees," they answered, and thus "Teté," which means "cutting down," became their name. When they finished their work they sent some men to visit the Amatenango men and they found them gathering firewood. They asked again "What are you doing?" "Hoob'tah," "gathering" the other responded, and that became their name. Both villages today call themselves and each other by these names.

Linguistics

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197 The legend summarized above seems to imply that the two villages were populated by people who could speak to each other in the same language. This is confirmed by linguistic evidence.